



VA Office of Environmental Education Annual Report 2008

DEQ programs help educators across the Commonwealth work together to provide high quality environmental education to support school and community-based environmental literacy. Major priorities are implementing Virginia's plan for Environmental Education, including the education commitments of the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement, Virginia's academic standards and building capacity within communities to deliver environmental education. Across the state, 10 regional teams are bringing together local conservation organizations and education agencies to implement stewardship projects, provide field experiences for students and educate citizens about local issues. More school divisions are providing meaningful watershed experiences on Virginia's Chesapeake Bay, tributaries and local streams. In July, the Litter Prevention program joined the office. The Community Involvement Specialist moved to the water program to help integrate community participation into the agency's new responsibilities for biosolids.

Virginia Naturally

In 2008, 59 new partners signed up to participate in the statewide network. Monthly electronic newsletters are sent to over 1,500 educators and litter and recycling program managers across Virginia. 161 partners attended the Annual Environmental Education Conference, held at Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville VA to receive state updates and professional development. Thirteen regional teams/alliances are collaborating in various areas of the state to bring together educators and resources to deliver high quality education to citizens and schools in Virginia. Twenty one (21) community leaders participated in Water Leadership Training at the Danville Science Center. Training was provided to 1,202 community educators at 47 professional development workshops. In addition, the office provided coordination, public information, and educational resources to 1,937 people at 28 outreach events. 34 VaNaturally partner organizations received local, state and national awards. Stewardship VA reported more than 5,400 volunteers received certificates for 303 stewardship projects.



Non-Competitive Litter Prevention and Recycling Grants

In FY 2008 304 (out of a possible 324) local governments were given non-competitive litter grants for litter and recycling programs. In FY 2008 \$1,856,512 was awarded to the local governments which in turn matched these awards with \$8,157,026 in cash and in-kind services resulting in a match of 439%. The money for the non-competitive litter prevention and recycling grants is generated through a litter tax that is paid by Virginia manufacturers and retailers. Each local government decides how to best support anti-littering efforts within their region and uses the non-competitive grant funds to support these efforts.

Virginia Classroom and Partner Grants

Last year, with funding from the Virginia Environmental Endowment and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, teachers are helping students having meaningful environmental experiences. Two more rounds of applications have been awarded, distributing \$50,150 to 70 schools. Additional funding from NOAA of \$40,000 expanded support to community, non-formal groups to build capacity in their localities for meaningful youth watershed programs. Two rounds of Partner Grants have been awarded totaling 13 grants for \$23,250.

C2K Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences: MWEEs

Through a NOAA Chesapeake Bay BWET grant for nearly \$100,000, an additional 11 school divisions are working with DEQ and the Virginia Department of Education to develop system-wide plans to integrate meaningful watershed educational experiences (MWEEs) into their curricula. To date, 14 divisions, including 50 classroom and community educators participated in a two-day training to develop the plans which include professional development and student field investigations.

6th Grade Science Standards Institute

The fourth year of the Sixth Grade Science Standards Institutes was offered in collaboration with other state agencies (DGIF, DOF, and DOE), Virginia Science Education Leadership Association and Virginia Association of Science Teachers and reached 21 teachers and more than 2,000 students. Staff added several new links to the Sixth Grade Science SOL on-line resources handbook. Funding of \$45,000 for this program comes from NOAA Chesapeake Bay BWET.

Project WET

In 2008, a total of 340 Virginia teachers, non-formal educators and college students participated in 20 workshops for Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) and its associated curriculum. Twelve (12) new workshop facilitators were trained to bring the total number of active volunteers to approximately 30.



Advanced Water Training: Healthy Water, Healthy People , Wonders of Wetlands, Places We Live

One workshop was conducted for 53 educators. These materials have been well-received and the web site, www.healthywater.org, is a terrific resource linking classroom activities to field activities and water quality parameters. Demand for these resources is growing as the new SOLs are being implemented. Virginia versions of two of the lessons (using DEQ's water quality data base) were developed and distributed at the workshops. Two Wonders of Wetland workshops were conducted for 55 people and one Places We Live workshop was conducted for 12 educators.

Oyster Festivals and other youth events

Oyster Festival Education Day – On November 6, Project Wet Trainer participated in water quality and wetlands education activities for 225 4th and 6th grade students from Middlesex and surrounding counties. VADEQ EE staff consulted on appropriate learning activities, assisted in the recruitment of guest instructors, and provided materials for 15 teacher's packets. With assistance from DEQ's Regional Offices and other agencies, staff supported events for more than 1,200 students participated featuring different air, water and waste activities. Student journals and teacher preparation helped make the experience meaningful.

Clean Air Champions

A statewide campaign completed the second year in an effort to educate motorists, especially new drivers, about the benefits of improving air quality by reducing fuel consumption and ozone generation through tire pressure and engine maintenance. In cooperation with James Madison University, the campaign was again used to launch the ozone season in May. The Clean Air Champions curriculum, developed for high school aged drivers, adopted by the Virginia Department of Education for use in the driver education program, promises to reach about 80,000 students and 600 teachers per year.



Environmental Educators Leadership Program

The Environmental Educators Leadership Program (EELP) has been developed to enhance the professional skills and abilities of Virginia educators for the protection of the environment. Components developed in the past year are an educator self-assessment, resource specific educator profiles, and a manager's edition of the self-assessment. Over 100 educators have participated in EELP sponsored workshops covering *Water Quality in the Coalfields*, *It's Our Water* North Carolina curriculum guide, and a Water Leadership workshop focusing on designing investigative water education experiences and building financial support for water education. Additional information about this program can be found online at <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/education/eelp.html>.

Community Involvement

Educating and encouraging Virginians to participate more effectively in environmental actions is the goal of DEQ's community involvement program. DEQ is helping to involve the public early and often in significant environmental activities. DEQ regional offices have convened over 100 participatory events involving hundreds of individuals, businesses, governing bodies and organizations across the state. Regional open meetings and events provided opportunities for stakeholders to become more informed

DEQ Community Involvement

LISTENING. LEARNING. COLLABORATING.

Protecting Virginia's environment together.

and engaged in the public environmental decision making process. DEQ staff focused on improving communication, community meetings, and stakeholder participation in the TMDL, Biosolids, Nutrient Management, and Water Supply Planning programs.